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Cyprus

Tensions Rise Following Arms Theft

Tensions have increased between the Makarios government and the Greek-officered national guard following the theft last week of 126 light weapons from a national guard armory. The arms are believed to be intended for the hard-line remnants of EOKA-B, the pro-union with Greece organization led by General George Grivas until his death last January 1. The theft is reportedly the largest of several made from national guard stores this year.

The mainland Greek officers of the national guard were originally sent to Cyprus to train and help defend the Greek Cypriot community, but they have also served as a means for Athens to maintain its influence upon Cypriot events and upon the Makarios government. Makarios has sought to lessen this influence and increase his independence by creating the tactical reserve unit, a force of about 600 native Greek Cypriots loyal to him. He would like to expand this force into a full-fledged Greek Cypriot army to replace the suspect national guard.

Relations between Makarios and the Greek mainland officers have worsened since the death of Grivas. Makarios holds them responsible for two other weapons thefts in January and February, and for anti-government and anti-Makarios slogans shouted by national guardsmen March 25--the Greek national holiday--during a flag-raising ceremony at the Archbishopric. Presumably he is also concerned by the apparent involvement of guardsmen in support of anti-government and anti-Turkish student activity in recent weeks and their participation in the taunting of Turkish Cypriots in a mixed village on May 9. Finally, Makarios is suspicious of the continued refusal by the Greek officers to modify the pro-Greece, pro-enosis thrust of their recruitment and indoctrination program.

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Makarios may use the latest arms theft as a pretext to insist upon further restrictions on national guard activity. He may also demand the recall of some Greek mainland officers as he has done in the past. Further efforts to restrict the national guard could cause a serious new confrontation with the Athens government. [redacted] (b)(3)

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